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Can we truly love everybody?

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The Upanishads and Bhagwad Gita talk of universal love. Is it possible? How can I love a child on the street as much as my own child? Love my parents or spouse same way as some stranger? If we define love as feeling, then it is not possible. We have different feelings towards different people.

However, universal love is possible as an outcome of understanding our connection with everything else.

If we analyse the emotion of love, it is an expression of our deep connection. We end up loving the person in whose presence we feel accepted, connected, cared for, and completely validated. On the other hand, loss of connection with others leads to our feeling deep void, emptiness, loneliness, sadness or grief.

According to the Gita and Upanishads, connection is the reality of the universe. The whole world is one vast, intelligent cosmic order, which connects us to everyone and everything.

For example, the iron in haemoglobin molecule, which runs in our blood comes from iron particles that were released by the collision of stars. The food that we eat is quietly produced by plant kingdom with the help of sun, water, and earth. The houses that we live in, the cars in which we travel, the entire economic, social and physical infra available to us are an outcome of contribution of countless people whose names and identities are not known to us. The world is a vast network of connection, and our existence is deeply intertwined with everyone else through the intelligent order – Ishvara.

If we are alive to this connection, our lives are lived with different expressions of love. We understand that all our accomplishments can be attributed to countless factors, including our efforts, contribution of parents, teachers, friends, and employees. This makes us more grateful and less conceited.

As we see the generosity in the creation, we begin to open our hearts and reach out to others. We feel empowered as we understand that what we do today connects us to future outcomes.

As we are all part of one large cosmic order, we take utmost care not to harm any being that includes humans, animals and plant kingdom through thoughts, deeds and speech.

It makes us more accommodative towards others. We protect ourselves against abuse and exploitation but without anger or hatred towards others. For instance, if teeth bite tongue, we take enough precaution to ensure that our tongue does not get hurt again but we don't start hating the teeth.

Recognising and honouring this connection through above attitudes and acts is an expression of universal love. Our connection to countless others can be expressed through care, compassion, non-labelling, gratitude, not hurting living beings and environment. As we express love in different forms through our behaviour, we not only bring about external harmony but increase our own levels of satisfaction, cheerfulness, and joy.

On the other hand, if we are oblivious to the reality of connection, many emotions such as hatred, pride, loneliness, isolation, dissatisfaction and depression, can emerge.

To conclude, the Upanishads and Gita do not advise us to love everyone. They show us the reality of connection. If we grasp this reality, different expressions of universal love towards every being will flow naturally and organically.